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Demographics of Social Vulnerability

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Social vulnerability refers to the potential of a community to anticipate, cope, resist, and recover from the consequences of a natural disaster. The risk is greater in some populations than others based on several factors such as race, gender, level of income, age, and language.

Minority groups, for example, are economically disadvantaged, thus lacking the means to safeguard themselves from potential harm. Emergency managers have the obligation of identifying the groups within the society which are more vulnerable and allocate resources as well as applying other plans that minimize the losses suffered from a disaster.

Emergency managers should prioritize on saving lives and reducing the destruction of property. Therefore, they should first identify the vulnerable populations and evaluate different approaches to risk mitigation and choose the best (Flanagan et al., 2011). Social vulnerability helps the emergency managers to employ some structural and non-structural measures aimed at limiting adverse impacts of natural calamities. If there is a prediction of the occurrence of tidal surges, for instance, emergency managers can influence the at-risk populations to plant mangroves to minimize the effects such as soil erosion or washing away of structures such as buildings and bridges (Rufat et al., 2015).

The professionals can further organize school-based programs to educate the locals on the potential danger and offer recommendations on how to keep themselves safe. The knowledge of social vulnerability helps emergency managers to advise decision makers such as politicians and administrators on the nature and extent of potential risks faced by the neighboring communities (Dolan & Messen, 2012). As a result, the officials can undertake crucial steps in combating these threats to reduce the loss which leaves an adverse impact on the economy.

The lack of social vulnerability knowledge among the emergency managers can create various negative consequences to the at-risk populations. During catastrophes such as earthquakes, for instance, many people lose their lives and property worth millions of dollars destroyed. The loss of valuable citizens robs a nation of labor, which is essential in pushing the economy of the state forward (Dolan & Messen, 2012). On the same note, the destruction of property costs the government significant funds since establishing others, such as infrastructures require lots of money, which the country can invest in other sectors such as education and healthcare.

Natural disasters leave many people with severe health complications which further creates more pressure on the economy of the state due to treatment and medication costs. In most instances, governments step in to cater for the healthcare costs incurred by victims of a natural calamity. As a result, the state suffers national debts especially when the damage is severe, and the government cannot meet the costs thus turning to other countries for financial aid. Moreover, natural disasters create over-reliance on the limited natural resources such as land and water since the affected regions become inhabitable forcing the survivors and the neighboring communities to migrate to the already populated areas. As a result, cases of pollution become on the rise, which is a further threat to human health (Barata et al., 2011).

Conclusively, social vulnerability is an important tool that emergency managers can use to reduce the impact of natural disasters, for instance, earthquakes and floods. Whereas it is almost impossible to prevent the occurrence of such events, emergency managers can employ social vulnerability knowledge to lower the severity of these disasters. Through identifying the high-risk populations, emergency managers can put measures in place such as creating awareness among the locals about the impending danger and offering tips on how to safeguard

themselves, for example, establishing mobile clinics in times of floods to prevent water borne diseases. Ignoring social vulnerability would lead the nation to suffer severe consequences such as increased loss of lives and property besides greater financial costs which harm the economy of the state.

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